Charitable Reproof.

A

SERMON

Preached at

The Church of St. *Mary-le-Bow*,

TO THE

SOCIETIES

FOR

Reformation of Manners,

The 25th of MARCH 1700.

By the Right Reverend Father in God,
GILBERT Lord Biſhop of *SARUM*.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the ſaid Societies.

LONDON:
Printed for Ri. Chiſwell at the *Roſe and Crown*
in St. *Paul*s Church-Yard. 1700.

Charitable Report

A

SERMON

Preached

In the Church of St. Mary-le-Bow,

ON

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1786.

For the Benefit of Widows and Orphans,

OF

Clergymen of the Diocese of London.

By the Right Reverend Father in God,

BEILBY LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM.

27 Proverbs 5, 6.

Open rebuke is better than ſecret love.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kiſſes of an enemy are deceitful.

SElf-Love is ſo natural to us, that as it makes us apt to flatter our ſelves on all occaſions, ſo it inclines us to accept too eaſily of the flatteries of all others; even thoſe flatteries which Decency makes us turn away from, and ſeem to diſlike, are hearkned to by us: We open our Ears to them; we lay them up in our Memory, and do often pleaſe our ſelves with vain Reflections on them. But we are ſo little accuſtomed to find fault with our ſelves, or to reflect on our Errors and Follies, that when Thoughts of that kind break in upon us, we fly from them; we impute them to Vapours, to Fits of the Spleen and Melancholly. Our unwillingneſs to know our own Faults, or to be humbled under the ſenſe of them, makes us uneaſy when any venture on the moſt charitable, but

often the moſt unacceptable Act of Friendſhip, the telling us of our Faults. If it is poſſible, we will either deny or extenuate them: or if Senſe and good Breeding makes us civil to ſuch Friends, yet we will feel a Sharpneſs ariſe, we will Love them the leſs for it; and if we can, we will be ready to revenge our ſelves by returning ſome Admonitions to them; perhaps not without ſome Acrimony of Look or Stile. All this ariſes from the partiality and injuſtice with which we treat our ſelves, which muſt incline us to love others the better, who treat us in the ſame manner.

But as long as we have Faults, it is very fit that we be made acquainted with them: And ſince we are too much blinded in our own favour, it is a great Happineſs to fall into the hands of ſuch Friends as will not ſpare us: It is better that we ſhould hear of them even from Enemies, than to be kept in an Ignorance that muſt be fatal. There are few in the World who do not commend Friendſhip as the chief Happineſs of Life, and are not ready to run out upon the advantages of having found a true and faithful Friend; and yet even thoſe who are very copious upon ſo common a Theme, do not much care for the beſt Offices of Friendſhip.

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No man can perform this Act of Friendſhip, without ſome force put upon himſelf; unleſs there is a great mixture of Roughneſs and Superciliouſneſs in his Temper. Few love to touch a tender part, or to grieve a perſon who is dear to them. Therefore the harder it is to reprove another, it ought to be the more valued, and the better received. Careſſes and Congratulations paſs eaſily among Friends: Theſe are the common and natural Vents of Friendſhip. Reproofs and Admonitions go againſt the grain; therefore Friends ought to encourage them, let their Friends know, that they expect them, and by the good Entertainment that they give the firſt Eſſays made of this kind, to ſecure themſelves of a continuance of the like Freedom.

Solomon underſtood well the happineſs of having an ancient, and as it were a hereditary Friend made ſure of; therefore he ſays a little after the words of my Text, *Thine own Friend,* Ver. 10. *and thy Father's Friend, forſake not.* And in the words I have read, he ſets out the beſt uſe and effect of Friendſhip. In the preceding words he had ſet out the Miſchiefs that may ariſe from *Wrath* and *Anger*, which are *cruel* and *outragious*: To which he adds, *But who can ſtand before Envy? Wrath* and *Anger* are commonly provoked

voked by ill uſage, or injury; ſo Innocence may protect a man from them: But *Envy* is an ill-natur'd paſſion, that is raiſed without any provocation. The Vertues, or the Reputation, the Proſperity and Happineſs of others, ſet men on to detract from their Fame, or undermine their Happineſs, without any proſpect of advantage to themſelves. Men therefore whoſe Qualities, as well as their Condition, expoſe them to Envy, though they muſt expect their ſhare in it, yet are by my Text directed to the beſt Methods to prevent the advantages that Spiteful men may take; for if their Friends are before-hand with their Enemies in their Reproofs, and if they themſelves are ſo wiſe as to be corrected by their means, then envious Men will not find much matter to work on. Their Friends ſee their Faults while they are yet ſecret, before they break out into open obſervation; ſo by the kind ſeverity of their rebukes, they ſave them that ſhame, which the diſcoveries that Envy will ſoon make, may bring upon them.

Open rebuke is better than ſecret love. A Friendſhip that carries a man to *rebuke* another plainly and roundly, with a due meaſure of ſeverity, is better then *ſecret Love*; that is, a fond, tender, and indulgent Love, that may be

be ſincere and deep, but is ſo blind and feeble, as either not to ſee Faults in their Friends; or if they ſee any, not to be able to diſturb their Quiet by ſeaſonable Reproofs. Another ſenſe is given to theſe words; *Open*, that is, publick *rebuke*, is better than *ſecret love*; that is, *rebuke* in *ſecret*. Some can bear Reproofs in ſecret, but are not the better for them; therefore in ſuch Caſes, though we ought always to begin our Admonitions in private, according to our Saviour's Rule; yet when theſe do not prevail, we ought to *rebuke before all*, that if the Offender is not reclaimed by it, yet *that others may fear*. This is chiefly to take place when mens *ſins* are ſo publick, that *they go before to judgment*, and do as it were extort it. Such *wounds*, when given by a friend with a good deſign, and in a proper method, are *faithful*, that is, they are ſincere, they are proofs of his Fidelity to the Ties of Friendſhip, they will alſo attain their End; and as the Inciſions of a Skilful Surgeon are faithful, and do quickly heal again, ſo ſuch Rebukes will have a good effect. Others render the word, *Beautiful*; there is nothing more amiable in True Friendſhip, than ſo exact and juſt a Freedom, as makes a man neither to overlook nor to neglect the Faults of his Friend. On the other hand, the *Kiſſes* or Careſſes of

18 S.Matth. 15.

1 Tim.4.20.

24 Verſe.

an Enemy, who covers his Hatred with the Shews of Friendſhip, and with a diſſembled Behaviour, who kiſſes on deſign to betray, as *Judas did his Maſter*; Theſe are *deceitful*; they are falſe in them; they flatter perſons to their faces, for thoſe very Faults for which they will cenſure them ſeverely in Corners: they are alſo *deceitful*, while they ſee people commit Faults which they hope will be their ruin; and yet leſt they ſhould find that out, and prevent their ruin by ſeaſonable Correction, they ſtudy to humour them in them, that they may become Incorrigible, and be Infallibly ruined by them. But the word may be alſo rendred *frequent* and *earneſt*, or *hard* and *preſſing*, as well as *deceitful*. The ſenſe will then be, the *Kiſſes* or Careſſes *of an Enemy* will be redoubled; they will be officious in them both in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon. Flatterers, when they perceive that their baſe Obſequiouſneſs is acceptable, they follow cloſe upon that Scent; they are Aſſiduous and Abject in it. And whereas Friends are cautious, and muſt wait fit Opportunities to reprove, Flatterers find Acceſs at all times, and are ever Applauding every thing that is either ſaid or done by him, whom they hope either to ſubdue or ruin by their mean Compliances. Nor is it eaſy to ſhake off that ſervile Crew; their *kiſſes*

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are hard; they ſtrike againſt a weak part; few Men are wiſe enough to find them out, or ſtrong enough to reſiſt them. Some are ſo courſe in their Flatteries, that they muſt quickly be nauſeated; but Men of Deſign, who have the Art to ſeaſon their Flattery, to hit right in it, and are dextrous in the Methods of offering it, are often too hard for Men, who in all other reſpects may be very valuable, but in this only do really leſſen themſelves, by ſuffering others to magnify them too much.

Thus I have opened the various Rendrings of the Words of my Text; all amount to the ſame ſenſe in general, That we do then expreſs our Friendſhip in the beſt manner, when we do plainly and openly Reprove our Friends for their Faults, which will be much more uſeful to them than any Fondneſs, how deep or tender ſoever, when it makes us exceſſively Indulgent to them. Such Reproofs may be as Wounds, and give a very painful Uneaſineſs: but even that will be Medicinal; it will bring our Faults into View, and into our Remembrance; when we ſee that others obſerve us, it will bring us into a habit of looking more carefully to our ſelves, and of obſerving all our Words and Actions with due Attention: Whereas on the other hand, Enemies, who

have no other Regards but for their own Ends, or perhaps for our Ruin, they will by frequent Flatteries, well timed, and skilfully infuſed, ſo corrupt our Minds, that as they will render us more uneaſy to the Rebukes of our true and faithful Friends, ſo they will feed our Self-love to ſuch a height, that we ſhall be thereby expoſed to Errors that may end very fatally, and make us periſh unpitied, as well as live inexcuſable.

The Words thus opened, do lead us to examine our Obligations to this Duty of Reproving others: That will be ſoon ſetled, if we do conſider the Zeal that we owe to God
69 Pſal. 9. and to his Honour. *If the zeal of his houſe* does as it were *eat us up*, then *the reproaches of* thoſe who do as it were attack and defy him, *will fall on us.* We will feel a lively concern in us for the Honour of Religion; and when we ſee it diſhonoured, we will interpoſe, if it were but to expreſs a juſt Indignation at Impiety and Vice. If we have any regard to the Concerns of other Men, whether with reſpect to this Life, or to the next; and more particularly if we are under ſtrict Ties of Kindred, Friendſhip, or any other Relation to them; but chiefly if we watch over their Souls, and muſt give an account of them; then certainly
19 Lev. 17. we will not ſo far *hate our brother in our heart,*

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as to ſuffer ſin upon him, but will in one way or another reprove him, leſt by ſuch a vicious feebleneſs we bring *his blood on our own head*; that is, entitle our ſelves to a ſhare in the Judgments that thoſe Sins which we connived at may bring down both on him and on us. 33 Ezek. 6.

Eli had a large ſhare of Puniſhment for his Remiſneſs to his Sons: We have Sins enough of our own, we need not therefore take an additional Load of *partaking in other mens ſins*; and indeed, if we deſire to *keep our ſelves pure*, and to maintain in our Minds a juſt abhorrence of Sin, we ought never to contract ſo eaſy a neighbourhood and familiarity with it, even in others, as to let it paſs without feeling an indignation at it, and expreſſing that in the propereſt methods we can fall on. We owe it to the Society we live in, and to the next Generation that is growing up before us, to take care that Sins, eſpecially open ones, and ſuch as are apt to ſpread and infect others, ſhould be either repreſſed by ſecret Reproofs, or the Sinners be brought to open Shame and Puniſhment, that ſuch as ſee the one, may likewiſe ſee or hear of the other. 1 Sam. 2. 13. 1 Tim. 5 22.

If Sins grow National, and are avowedly practiſed without Shame or Check, they will probably be put to the account of the whole Nation, and ſo they may draw down National

nal Judgments, from which we have no reaſon to expect an Exemption, if we do not except our ſelves, by doing our duty in order to their correction: But when that is done, we may expect a diſtinction, even in a common Calamity; or at leaſt we ſhall have this comfort, even if we are overwhelm'd in it, that we were not wanting in our Endeavours to ſtave it off, by putting a ſtop to thoſe Sins that brought it on.

I will dwell no longer on this; for how little ſoever ſome may like Reproof, as generally thoſe who need it moſt, like it leaſt; yet all will agree in the general, That it is abſolutely neceſſary for the preſerving the Order and Peace of Society, that there ſhould be both Reprovers to admoniſh, and Magiſtrates to puniſh Offenders. It is therefore more neceſſary to ſhew how this ought to be managed to the beſt advantage, and with the moſt probable hopes of ſucceeding in it.

The firſt and moſt neceſſary Rule, is that given by our Saviour, That no man ſhould offer to reprove another, who is eminently and notoriouſly faulty himſelf; he who having a *beam before his eye*, does not remove that, but goes about to take a *ſmall chip of wood out of his neighbour's eye*, does juſtly lay himſelf open, according to our Saviour's words, to the Imputation of *hypocriſy*.

7 Matth. 3, 4, 5.

pocriſy. The averſion that is in every man to the being ſubject to the Corrections of others, will then riſe up into a juſt Indignation, when he finds that he is thus ſet on, by a man who is known to be more guilty than himſelf. It is an impudent thing to make that paſs for a crime in another, which we know we are practiſing every day our ſelves. Nor is it enough to authorize a man to be a Monitor, that he does not offend juſt in that ſort and manner for which he blames others. He muſt be a man of Integrity in all reſpects; Education, Age, Habits, and the different Circumſtances of Life, may make a great diverſity with relation to particular Sins; yet both Virtue and Vice are complicated Things; and if a man is in ſome parts of his Life irregular, eſpecially if he lives in thoſe Sins that carry a Train along with them, his Reproofs cannot have a great Effect. Let a man be ever ſo ſober and temperate, yet if he is falſe and deceitful, if he is unjuſt and ſpiteful, thoſe things which require Thought and Study, and in which Men do purſue a deſign, and where they are not convinced of their Faults, nor redreſs them by reſtoring or repairing that in which they have wronged others; all this man's Reproofs will be thrown off, as ſoon as it is known how crafty or falſe he is: they will be reckon'd among the Arts of Hypocriſy, by which he ſtudies to gain

gain ſome Credit and Authority, that it may help him to go on in his other wicked Practices, and may at leaſt keep him long from being ſuſpected of them, or diſcovered in them; for a man who paſſes for a grave Admoniſher of others, ſeems to be thereby covered from all black Imputations. I am afraid ſome Diſcoveries of this ſort that have been made, may have brought a Scandal upon all Pretenders to Religion: For as there is no Principle nor Party in Religion that can ſupport Men in thoſe deceitful Practices; ſo no man is guilty of them, but he himſelf knows it, he goes into them with Deliberation and Study, and he lives in them ſtill, till by as full a reſtitution as he can poſſibly make, he has compleated his Repenting of them. After all, it is not enough to qualify a man to *rebuke with authority*, that he cannot be charged with as bad things as thoſe are for which he blames others; he muſt *ſhine*
2 Phil. 15. *as a light in the world*; there muſt be ſomething Eminent and Exemplary in his whole Deportment. His Candor and Integrity, his Humility and Meekneſs, his Modeſty and Charity, muſt be ſo
5 Matth 16. conſpicuous, that *his light may thereby ſhine before others*; and then he may more reaſonably hope, that others may be wrought on both by his Example and Influence to *glorify his Father which is in Heaven.* Ano-

Another Rule to be obſerved in Reproving is, to do it in ſuch a manner, that it may appear we are their Friends whom we reprove, and that we Correct them for their own Good. Some by indulging too much to a ſharp and moroſe Temper, reprove with an acrimony and heat, that is liker to provoke than to gain upon any: We ought to *reprove in kindneſs* (for ſo the words of the Pſalm may be rendred) and then thoſe ſmitings will be as an *excellent oil that will not break their heads* whom we reprove. The tenderneſs we expreſs will enforce our Admonitions, and it will raiſe the ſpirits of thoſe, whom freer Reproofs might otherwiſe depreſs too much: As therefore we ought, chiefly when we begin to deal with any in this way, to addreſs our Reproofs in the ſofteſt manner poſſible, and ſhew while we Reprove others, a readineſs in our ſelves to ſubmit to the like Reproofs from them; ſo we ought to watch all occaſions in which it may be in our power to do acts of kindneſs to them; that having by this means got ſome intereſt in their affections, we may have thereby the more credit with them. We ought to be ready to own how near we our ſelves may have been in other parts of our life to thoſe very faults for which we blame them. We ought to make our firſt eſſays at Pſ. 141. 5.

fit times and in the likelieſt way to ſucceed, in private, or in a Letter; thus to make our approaches in the propereſt manner, that ſo we may conquer and gain him whom we take to task; and we muſt be ſure to join with the Severity that may be neceſſary, ſuch mollifying ſtrokes as may ſecure to us a ready acceſs for the future, if there is occaſion to return again to the like Admonitions; but then tho we muſt riſe in the ſeverities of our ſtile, yet we ought never to ſink in the expreſſions of our affection, as long as we have any hopes of ſucceeding in the way of private Admonition.

But the moſt comprehenſive Rule in the management of Reproofs, is to order them with diſcretion and prudence; otherwiſe all we can do that way will have no effect; we will paſs either for hypocritical, moroſe, ſupercilious, or fantaſtical Men. This is a thing of great extent, and may be ſo much diverſified, that it will not be eaſy to bring it all under clear and certain Rules; but ſome few of the more obvious are to be conſidered.

Firſt, With relation to the things for which we find fault with others, they ought to be of ſome Importance: In trifles it is not worth the while to reprove. To ſtand too nicely upon

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ſmall matters, may give others ſuch a mean opinion of our Underſtanding, that our Admonitions on greater occaſions will make no impreſſion, becauſe they have been often applied to ſuch inconſiderable things. The inſiſting too much on a peculiar Cut of the Hair, as was too common in the laſt Age, or on Modes of Dreſs, is a ſure way to bring our Reproofs into ſuch Contempt, that all we can offer at, will look like Affectation or Singularity. We ought not to lay too much weight on ſmall or diſputable things, but ſhould proportion our Zeal to the importance of the Matters we are concerned for. We ought alſo to have ſome good reaſon to believe Men to be guilty of thoſe things for which we deal roundly with them. It is hard enough to ſubmit to Reproof even when Men know that they do deſerve it, but if they know they are Innocent, they will very naturally juſtify themſelves, they will accuſe their Reprovers as Credulous and Uncharitable, and will not fail to put them in mind at another time when reproved, though they know themſelves guilty, how that upon another occaſion they were unjuſtly ſuſpected and blamed; therefore when we do Reprove, we ought to make juſt allowances for the falſe Reports that go in the World, and be ready

both to be diſabuſed by them, or at leaſt to make all the juſt abatements that in reaſon can be ſuppoſed, and be ready rather to leſſen than to aggravate the Offence.

Another meaſure of Diſcretion is with relation to the Perſons to whom we may addreſs our Reproofs; generally ſpeaking, Junior or Inferior Perſons ought not to Reprove thoſe who are above them in Age and Rank; yet ſome Exceptions muſt be made even to this, *for Old Men are not always Wiſe.* Our Saviour after he had given the Rule which I named firſt of all, of Correcting our own greater faults before we preſume to blame others for leſſer ones, adds another
Matt. 7. 6. that will require great attention, *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither caſt ye your pearls before ſwine, leſt they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.* Some Men are of ſo boiſterous and inſolent a Temper, that we can have no reaſon to believe they will be the better for Reproof, or that they are capable of bearing it. They will probably turn upon us with fury, and ask us, What right we have to tell them of their Faults: Perhaps to revenge themſelves, they will treat us opprobriouſly and charge us falſely with groſs faults for no other reaſon, but becauſe we have offered ſome charitable Reproofs to them:

These are the Persons meant by our Saviour under the Figure of *dogs*, who will *turn* upon us and *rend* us, by all the injuries they can think on. Others are as Swine so brutal and impudent, so depraved and stupid, that they despise all that can be laid before them. When it appears that our Admonitions are like either to have no effect at all, or to have bad ones, we may reckon that we are not under the common Obligations of Reproving, if there are no probabilities of our succeeding in them.

Another measure of Discretion to be used in Reproving, is to chuse the time of doing it as nicely as we can; but even in this, caution must be used: Commonly speaking, Afflictions bring Men into a temper fit for being the better for Admonition; but some may sink so much under their burthen, that it may be too severe to lay more load upon them. In sickness, as the danger may be greater, so the Obligation is more indispensable: But in all those cases it will be necessary to use a due mixture of Skill; as well as Fidelity, that we may not *add affliction to the afflicted*, more than is absolutely necessary both for the good of those concerned, and for the discharge of our own Consciences. A prudent method in addressing Reproof, we see in *Nathan*, who though he acted upon an immediate

mediate Commiſſion from God, yet introduced
2 Sam. 12. that ſevere Meſſage he had to *David* by a Parable, which engaged him before he ſaw into the Prophet's deſign, to pronounce his own Condemnation. A Man may furniſh himſelf with many Stories of what paſſes daily in the World, by the telling of which he may prepare a Perſon to bear with his freedom: In ſome of thoſe Stories a guilty Perſon may find both his faults and the conſequences of them ſo plainly ſet forth, that if he does not feel that, he would not feel, or at leaſt he would not bear a cloſer application.

But the laſt and chief Rule in managing Reproof, is to order it ſo, that it may not paſs barely as a finding fault with another upon ſome general and popular Notions, which will have no great operation, but that it may carry with it ſo full a Conviction, that he who is Reproved may ſee that there is great and juſt cauſes for ſuch Admonitions. I ſhall in this deſcend to Inſtances of two ſorts, which relate to ſome of thoſe things, the Correcting of which is chiefly deſigned by theſe Societies.

When we Reprove any for entring into that lewd commerce of forbidden pleaſure, at which the corruption of Youth does commonly begin; we ought to let them ſee, that if they break

break through the meaſures of Modeſty, their Appetites will grow more and more violent and unruly. Theſe will be for ſome time reſiſted by the checks of Conſcience; but when by ill practices often repeated, thoſe are blunted, and young Men free themſelves from ſtricter Rules, this will involve them in ill deſigns, theſe will draw them into much lying, and many baſe methods to ſupport the expence of a vitious courſe of life. They will become ſlothful in all their Affairs, and thus their care and induſtry being once ſlackned, they have no reaſon to hope that they can ſucceed in their buſineſs, as they can have none to expect a Bleſſing from God upon their endeavours. Nor can they go long or far in thoſe unlawful pleaſures, but they will be diſcovered, and by that they muſt ſuffer much in their Reputation; for though Men may take too much pleaſure in lewd Company, yet few care to deal with ſuch Perſons, or put any confidence in them. And this is all evident, beſides the ill effects that ſuch a courſe of life may have on their Perſons and Families; for if the Banks of Modeſty are once cut through, they are ſeldom made up again; ſuch a courſe of life muſt ſtrangely agitate the Mind between the violence of paſſion, and the fear of a diſcovery: This muſt let

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in ſuch a black train of baſe and curſed thoughts upon a Man's Mind, and muſt ſet him at ſuch a diſtance from God and all Religious Exerciſes, that the ſetting this in a true light before one, with ſuch ſtories as may be eaſily pick'd up to confirm from daily experience what is thus to be ſet out; all this, I ſay, may through the Bleſſing of God, make a deep Impreſſion, and raiſe ſtedfaſt Reſolutions of keeping this Sin at the greateſt diſtance, by not entring into thoſe liberties, into that converſation, and into thoſe nearneſſes to it, which may be fatal, and muſt certainly be ſo, where Nature is ſo ſtrong on the ſide of Sin, that it ought not to be too much truſted to.

Another inſtance of managing Reproofs ſhall be given in the Sin of Swearing. It is a common, but a very unbecoming anſwer, when Men are told of their Swearing, *I ask you Pardon, I did not think on't*: As if the Offence were againſt a Mortal like our ſelves, and not againſt the Sovereign Lord of Heaven and Earth: Much as if a Subordinate Magiſtrate finding fault for a high Offence committed againſt the King, ſhould be ſo anſwered. Alas! how ſmall is the Offence committed againſt us in compariſon of the diſhonour done to God! And it aggravates the Sin when a Man is ſo habi-

habituated to it, that he falls into it without reflection, or ſo much as knowing that he had ſo tranſgreſſed. But if a Man who has unhappily accuſtomed himſelf to this curſed Dialect, will be ſo far calm as to hearken to what may be offered to him, it may be fit to ſhew him that the root of all Religion is a Veneration for the Deity, and that nothing weakens this more, than a Cuſtom of thinking and ſpeaking ſlightly of God; nothing is more unbecoming the dread that ought to poſſeſs us, and the awe of God under which we ought to live, than this profane practice; which is ſo contrary to all decency and juſt reſpect: Beſides, no Man goes into the habit of common Swearing, but he will be very apt to ſupport Falſehoods with repeated Oaths; and the more he ſees he is ſuſpected, he will ſtudy to fortify his credit by whole peals of them; though ſuch as do not believe a Man upon his Word, are ſeldom convinced by the frightfulleſt Oaths he can bring forth, which do rather ſerve to increaſe than to lay jealouſy. Now if we have any right Notions of God, we muſt conclude that an Oath being an Appeal to him, a falſe Oath is an Appeal to him as it were to vouch for our Lies: And if no Honeſt Man could with patience hear another appeal to him to give credit to a

Lie, What do we think of the God of Truth, if we can imagine that falſe Oaths will go unpuniſhed?

This matter may be carried yet further, to ſhew what diſmal conſequences ariſe from the habit of common Swearing: Nothing tends more viſibly to the perverting the courſe of Juſtice, and the diſſolving our whole Government, which turns much upon Swearing, than a vicious habit that takes away the fear of an Oath. He who never Swears but upon great and juſt occaſions, comes to it full of dread, and full of the Impreſſions that ariſe from a belief of the Attributes of God: Whereas he to whom common practice has made Oaths become familiar, cannot have that fear of an Oath that is neceſſary to ſtrike the ſenſe of an Obligation from it deep into his Conſcience.

England is the Nation of the whole World that has ſtudied the moſt to ſecure it ſelf by Oaths. All Employments are entred upon by peculiar Oaths; many of theſe are very large and comprehenſive. How great is the extent of the Oath of a Grand Jury? Does not all matters of Life and Death, as well as of Property, turn upon the regard that Jurors have to their Oath? ſo that Blood-ſhed, or Property, given unjuſtly by their Verdict, muſt lie heavy

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on them; and to bind it the heavier, they take the Oath of God upon them to give a juſt Verdict. The Evidence given upon Oath, is that which muſt direct both Judge and Jury. A Man muſt have ſtrangely ſubdued his Conſcience that dares prevaricate and go againſt it, when he is under the quick ſenſe of an Oath newly taken. When Men are once corrupted to ſuch a degree, there is an end of all Juſtice and Order. How far are we got into this? What loud complaints do we hear every where of Sets of Suborned Witneſſes, and of Partial Juries? The Obligations to Juſtice and Equity ought to be ſtrong of themſelves, nothing can force them more than theſe ſacred Bonds of a ſolemn Appeal to God. But can Men, whoſe common Dialect is made up of Oaths and Imprecations, conſider an Oath ſo much as to be under any deep Impreſſions of dread and horror from it? Oaths of Magiſtrates, or Men in other Employments, are very Comprehenſive, and too ſoon let go out of their Minds. It were a good method to enter ſuch Oaths as one takes, in a Book that comes often in view, that ſo it may be frequently conſidered as a powerful motive to engage him to the faithful diſcharge of his Duty. It were to be wiſhed, that the Oaths of Magiſtrates were more explicite; but Men of Conſci-

ence will conſider Oaths well before they come to take them, that ſo they may make a true judgment whether they think they can or will keep them, and accordingly they will either avoid the occaſions of being entangled by them, or if they do take them, they will be governed exactly by them.

Upon the whole matter, when all this is laid together, it will appear that the curſed habit of common Swearing, has ſo many ill tendencies and effects, that there being nothing on the other hand to recommend it, but a depraved Cuſtom, every one will ſoon ſee, what need there is to watch over himſelf, till he wears out of that profane and impious Stile; and if he is not watchful enough over himſelf, he will eaſily be convinced, how much he is obliged to thoſe to help him to be more careful; when all he ſuffers by it, is that at the expence of a little trouble and ſhame, and a ſmall Forfeit, he is taught to keep his Tongue with more caution.

And now I have done with all that I intend to ſay from my Text: It remains that I ſay ſomewhat with relation to the occaſion of our Meeting together at this time.

We have enjoyed a long continuance of Peace and Plenty; even a long and devouring War has made no great Impreſſion: We have been

been ſafe and quiet at home, when all the World about us was in a flame. Nor has the great expence of the War altered the face of Plenty every where: I am ſorry to ſay it, our Luxury and Vanity, the Symptoms of an overflowing Plenty, have not leſſened upon all that Charge; I wiſh it were not too viſible, that they increaſe upon us. We may remember how near we were to great dangers; it is not ſo long ſince we ſaw a Cloud gathered and ſet over our heads, that we had reaſon to fear was to burſt out in Storms and Tempeſts; and muſt have thrown us into terrible Convulſions, if not into utter Ruin.

All this went over with ſo little diſturbance that we ſcarce felt our Danger, till we were Delivered from it; and after a War that gave ſo melancholy a proſpect, in a courſe of many Years, we are now at Peace with all the World abroad: But, alas! Are we at Peace with God or among our ſelves? Does not Impiety and Atheiſm, that walk abroad without either fear or ſhame, ſeem to dare and defy God even to his Face? This is ſuch a plain Revolt from God, and a riſing, as it were, up againſt him, that we have no reaſon to think that he will not at laſt ariſe and viſit for all theſe things. How ſoon can he withdraw his Defence? And then how

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eaſily may that which we rely on be blaſted? Storms may ſhatter our Fleets, and if God ſhould for our Sins deliver us ſo far to an Enemy that they ſhould but once Land upon us, How naked and defenceleſs are we? How ſoon muſt all be over-run? And what a ſcene of Confuſion and Pillage, of deſolation and Ruin would quickly open upon us? But we need not another Enemy than our ſelves; we are going into ſuch ſtrong and deeply rooted Animoſities, our hatred to one another, our jealouſy of one another, our quarrels and factions, do ſo increaſe, and are growing to ſuch a height, that if no Temper can be found, and if there is no Interpoſition from the Goodneſs of God, or the Wiſdom of Men, to put a ſtop to the progreſs of all theſe Evils, they muſt end fatally at laſt; we may go on to bite and devour one another, till in concluſion we are conſumed one of another. What can put a ſtop to all theſe ſad things that we may juſtly fear? A general Reformation is too great a Bleſſing to be ſoon hoped for. In theſe matters Men ſeldome go all of the ſudden from one extreme to another. God knows how near we are the extreme of an univerſal Depravation. It gives us ſome ſmall beginnings of hope, that in and about this great City, from which the Nation is apt to take its ply, whither

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to good or bad; there has been for ſome years paſt a Spirit ſtirring, that looks like a reviving, as if even our *dry bones could live*: A Spirit of true devotion, a ſeriouſneſs in the ſervice of God, a frequency at Sacrament, with a Zeal for Religion and againſt Vice, ſhew themſelves upon many eminent occaſions, as if by a noble Oppoſition the more that the Men of Impiety ſhew themſelves, and enter into Clubs and Confederacies to advance their wicked deſigns, the Spirit of Zeal ſhould take fire from thence, and be fortified by the joint endeavours of thoſe, who while many ſay, *It is vain to ſerve God*, and *what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance?* thoſe *who fear the Lord ſpeak often one to another. Their words* how ſecret ſoever *are heard by God*, and all is entred *in a book of remembrance written for them that fear the Lord, and that think of his name, for they ſhall be his; and in that day when he makes up his jewels, he will ſpare them as a man ſpareth his own ſon that ſerveth him.* Bleſſed be God for this *door of hope* which he is thus opening to us! and Bleſſed be they of the Lord who have offered themſelves ſo willingly before him and before all the People! Their Name ſhall be of a good Savour in the preſent and in the ſucceeding Generations, who have begun the firſt to ſet forward ſo noble a Deſign, to put a ſtop to ſo many

Malac. 3. 14, 16, 17.

ny vicious practices, and to raise a true Spirit of Piety and Virtue among us. These are *the salt of the earth, the Pillars of it, and the light of the world.*

Go on you noble Christians, shine more and more as patterns of those Virtues which you endeavour to recommend to others. Your Enemies wait for your halting, that by your Errors they may bring up a scandal upon Religion and Godliness. The publick Crimes of some who pretended highly, brought within our memory such an ill reputation upon Religion, that we have laboured under the ill effects of those prejudices ever since. This we hope will make you the more watchful and diligent, lest by your means the Name of God should be again Blasphemed. Go on and see to the Execution of the Laws, but do it with a Zeal becoming the Gospel, and not with a Pharisaical or bitter Zeal. Be not discouraged, neither by the slow progress that you can make, nor by the contradiction and slanders that you may meet with. Go on and prosper, for great is your Reward in Heaven; and while you study to repair the Breaches that are made in the House of God, you may hope that God will build up Houses for you and your Posterity, and will at last receive you into Everlasting Habitations. *To whom be Glory for ever.*

FINIS.

The Biſhop of *Sarum*'s Reflections

On a Book concerning

The Rights of an *Engliſh* Convocation.